

HIRING & KEEPING GOOD EMPLOYEES

By Norm Bobay
January 18th, 2000

Employers today are caught between the proverbial “rock and a hard place”. They need more qualified personnel to do some of the most basic of tasks but the labor pool is tight and qualified personnel are limited. Many employers have resorted to hiring bodies in hopes of retaining a few good ones (“Like an archer that wounds at random is he who hires a fool or a passer-by”. Proverbs 26:10). And some employers have even decided to delay the growth of the business until the employment market changes.

Answers to the problem of hiring and keeping good employees are often difficult to come by and may demand a change in the way things have been done in the past. But change is inevitable; and the way an employer manages change has a direct impact on their success. Some employers are what I call “Inactive Employers”. Their head is buried in the sand and they hope the problem will just go away or that someone will come up with a miracle solution that will require little or no effort on their part. Other employers are what I call “Reactive Employers”. They are generally slow to change and only do so when it is absolutely necessary, often after it is too late. A successful employer is what I call a “Proactive Employer”. They not only embrace change, they plan on it and are constantly looking for and trying new ways of doing things. They tend to be open-minded and value creative ideas as a part of their culture.

Much like a professional sports team, a Proactive Employer does not just hire personnel, they recruit them. Walk-ons are the exception to the rule. They are “looking” (scouting) for the right person for the job, not just a body to fill a position. Bodies tend to go as easily as they come, whereas recruits stay as part of the team and produce well. The following are some basic steps that can enhance your success at hiring and keeping good employees.

STEP ONE: Define the need.

Most sports teams have a limit to the number of personnel that they can have on their roster. Be able to justify hiring another person. Are the personnel currently employed doing all that they are capable of doing? Do you have a way of measuring it? If not, is it a true need or could it be due to mismanagement or inefficient processes? You owe it to yourself to find out before you invest in additional personnel.

STEP TWO: Define the position.

A professional sports team does not just hire players, but specific players to do a specific job. A good job description should not only include the tasks to be completed, but the tools and processes required as well as the goals expected and the personality make-up of a successful team player.

STEP THREE: Recruit.

Use innovative ways to seek new personnel. Train current personnel to be on the lookout for quality personnel before there is a need. If you use employment agencies (scouts), be sure that they understand your criteria and that you will accept nothing less. Before you get too far into the hiring process with a candidate, do a good background check (e.g. criminal, credentials, drivers license, etc.). Do not borrow someone else's troubles.

STEP FOUR: Assess

Enhance the interview with good tests of ability. Skills are important but can be developed easier than other areas of concern. Be sure your assessments reveal a person's behavioral tendencies, values and attitudes. The thing most managers find frustrating is the employee who could do the job, but won't. The more areas you assess the better your chances of having a good match.

STEP FIVE: Reward them.

Turnover is extremely costly. A good employee is worth their weight in gold! Signing bonuses are not unusual in sports and are becoming more common in the business sector. But cash money is not the only area of concern. Appreciation is always appreciated and a kind word is always kind. Also, some unique perks are being utilized in today's markets that are tailored to an individual's needs. A little creative thinking in this area outside the box could go a long way in securing a loyal workforce.

STEP SIX: Develop their potential.

A good manager is not a manager at all, but a coach. A coach is always looking for ways to encourage his team and motivate them to be their best. Studies overwhelmingly conclude that companies that invest in developing their personnel out produce and out sell their competitors by 200-300 percent.

Hiring and keeping good employees today is no easy task. There are no quick fixes. It requires a strong commitment by management and some creative thinking. The up front cost will seem expensive, but the long-term results will pay off many times over.